

The Chalice of Courage

Being the Story of Certain Persons
Who Drank of it and Conquered

A Romance of Colorado

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"The Island of Regeneration,"
"The Better Man," "Hearis and
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Fly Upward," etc., etc.

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Edith Maitland, a frank, free and unspoiled young Philadelphia girl, is taken to the Colorado mountains by her uncle, Robert Maitland. James Armstrong, Maitland's protégé, falls in love with her.

CHAPTER II.—His persistent wooing thrills the girl, but she hesitates, and Armstrong goes east on business without a definite answer.

CHAPTER III.—Enid hears the story of a mining engineer, Newbold, whose wife fell off a cliff and was so seriously hurt that he was compelled to shoot her to prevent her being eaten by wolves while he went for help.

CHAPTER IV.—Kirby, the old guide who tells the story, gives Enid a package of letters which he says were found on the dead woman's body. She reads the letters and at Kirby's request keeps them.

CHAPTER V.—While Enid is bathing in the river in fancied solitude, a big bear appears on the bank and is about to plunge into the water to attack the girl when a shot rings out and the animal is killed by a strange man.

CHAPTER VI.—Enid is caught in a storm which wipes out her party's camp. She is dashed upon the rocks and injured. The strange man who shot the bear finds her unconscious and carries her to shelter.

CHAPTER VII.—Members of the camping party realizing that Enid is lost in the storm institute a frantic search for the missing girl.

CHAPTER VIII.—No trace of her is found and word is telegraphed to her father, James Armstrong, who is asking the father for Enid's hand when the telegram arrives expressing the belief that the girl is dead. Armstrong says he will find her, and Maitland agrees to their marriage if he succeeds.

By and by, in the last stage of their journey, her head dropped on his shoulder and she actually fell into an



He Stared at Her in Great Alarm.

uneasy troubled sleep. He did not know whether she slumbered or whether she had fainted again. He did not dare to stop to find out, his strength was almost spent; in this last effort the strain upon his muscles was almost as great as it had been in the whirlpool. For the second time that day the sweat stood out on his forehead, his legs trembled under him. How he made the last five hundred feet up the steep wall to a certain broad shelf perhaps an acre in extent where he had built his hut among the mountains, he never knew; but the last remnant of his force was spent when he finally opened the unlatched door with his foot, carried her in the log hut and laid her upon the bed or bunk built against one wall of the cabin.

Yet the way he put her down was characteristic of the man. That last vestige of strength had served him well. He did not drop her as a less thoughtful and less determined man might have done. He laid her there as gently and as tenderly as if she weighed nothing, and as if he had carried her newborn. So quiet and so was his handling of her that she not wake up at once.

So soon as she was out of the storm he stood up and stared at her in great alarm, which soon gave way to reassurance. She had not fainted, there was a little tinge of color in her cheek that had rubbed up against his rough hunting coat; she was asleep, her regular breathing told him that. Sleep was of course the very best of medicines for her, and yet she should not be allowed to sleep until she had got rid of her wet clothing and until something had been done for her

wounded foot. It was indeed an embarrassing situation.

He surveyed her for a few moments wondering how best to begin. Then realizing the necessity for immediate action, he bent over her and woke her up. Again she stared at him in bewilderment until he spoke.

"This is my house," he said, "we are home."

"Home!" sobbed the girl.

"Under shelter, then," said the man "You are very tired and very sleepy but there is something to be done; you must take off those wet clothes at once, you must have something to eat, and I must have a look at that foot, and then you can have your sleep out."

The girl stared at him, his program, if a radical one under the circumstances, was nevertheless a rational one, indeed the only one. How was it to be carried out? The man easily divined her thoughts.

"There is another room in this house, a store room. I cook in there," he said. "I am going in there now to get you something to eat; meanwhile you must undress yourself and go to bed."

He went to a rude set of box-like shelves draped with a curtain, apparently his own handiwork, against the wall, and brought from it a long and somewhat shapeless woolen gown.

"You can wear this to sleep in," he continued. "First of all, though, I am going to have a look at that foot."

He bent down to where her wounded foot lay extended on the bed.

"Wait," said the girl, lifting herself on her arm, and as she did so he lifted his head and answered her direct gaze with his own. "I am a woman, absolutely alone, entirely at your mercy; you are stronger than I, I have no choice but to do what you bid me. And in addition to the natural weakness of my sex I am the more helpless from this foot. What do you intend to do with me? How do you mean to treat me?"

It was a bold, a splendid question, and it evoked the answer it merited.

"As God is my judge," said the man quietly, "just as you ought to be treated, as I would want another to treat my mother, or my sister, or my wife"—she noticed how curiously his lips suddenly tightened at that word—"if I had one. I never harmed a woman in my life," he continued more earnestly, "only one, that is," he corrected himself, and once again she marked that peculiar contraction of the lips. "And I could not help that," he added.

"I trust you," said the girl at last, after gazing at him long and hard as if to search out the secrets of his very soul. "You have saved my life and things dearer will be safe with you. I have to trust you."

"I hope," came the quick comment, "that it is not only for that. I don't want to be trusted upon compulsion."

"You must have fought terribly for my life in the flood," was the answer. "I can remember what it was now, and you carried me over the rocks and the mountains without faltering. Only a man could do what you have done. I trust you anyway."

"Thank you," said the man briefly as he bent over the injured foot again.

The boot laced up the front, the short skirt left all plainness visible. With deft fingers he undid the sodden knot and unlaced it, then stood hesitatingly for a moment.

"I don't like to cut your only pair of shoes," he said as he made a slight motion to draw it off, and then observing the spasm of pain, stopped. "Needs must," he continued, taking out his knife and slitting the leather.

He did it very carefully so as not to ruin the boot beyond repair, and finally succeeded in getting it off without giving her too much pain. And she was not so tired or so miserable as to be unaware of his gentleness. His manner, matter of fact, business like, if he had been a doctor one would have called it professional, distinctly pleased her in this trying and unusual position. Her stocking was stained with blood. The man rose to his feet, took from a rude home-made chair a light Mexican blanket and laid it considerably across the girl.

"Now if you can manage to get on your feet, I will see what can be done," he said, turning away.

It was the work of a few seconds for her to comply with his request. Hanging the wet stocking carefully over a chair back, he drew back the blanket a little and carefully inspected the poor little foot. He saw at once that it was not an ordinary sprained ankle, but it seemed to him that her foot had been caught between two tossing logs, and had been badly bruised. It was very painful, but would not take so long to heal as a sprain. The little foot, normally so white, was now black and blue and the skin had been roughly torn and broken. He brought a basin of cold water and a towel and washed off the blood, the girl fighting down the pain and successfully stifling any outcry.

"Now," he said, "you must put on this gown and get into bed. By the time you are ready for it I will have some broth for you and then we will bandage that foot. I shall not come in here for some time, you will be quite alone and safe."

He turned and left the room, shutting the door after him as he went

out. For a second time that day Enid Maitland undressed herself and this time nervously and in great haste. She was almost too excited and apprehensive to recall the painful circumstances attendant upon her first disrobing. She said she trusted the man absolutely, yet she would not have been human if she had not looked most anxiously toward that closed door. He made plenty of noise in the other room, bustling about as if to reassure her.

She could not rest the weight of her body on her left foot, and getting rid of her wet clothes was a somewhat slow process in spite of her hurry, made more so by her extreme nervousness. The gown he gave her was far too big for her, but soft and warm and exquisitely clean. It draped her slight figure completely. Leaving her sodden garments where they had fallen, for she was not equal to anything else, she wrapped herself in the folds of the big gown and managed to get into bed. For all its rude appearance it was a very comfortable sleeping place; there were springs and a good mattress. The unbleached sheets were clean, although they had been rough dried; there was a delicious sense of comfort and rest in her position. She had scarcely composed herself when he knocked loud upon her door.

"May I come in?" he asked. When she bade him enter she saw he had in his hand a saucepan full of



He Walked Nervously Up and Down.

some steaming broth. She wondered how he had made it in such a hurry, but after he poured it into a granite-ware cup and offered it to her, she took it without question. It was thick, warming and nourishing. He stood by her and insisted that she take more and more. Finally she rebelled.

"Well, perhaps that will do for tonight," he said; now let's have a look at your foot."

She observed that he had laid on the table a long roll of white cloth; she could not know that he had torn up one of his sheets to make bandages, but so it was. He took the little foot tenderly in his hands.

"I am going to hurt you," he said. "I am going to find out if there is anything more than a bruise, any bones broken."

There was no denying that he did pain her exquisitely.

"I can't help it," he said as she cried aloud, "I have got to see what's the matter. I am almost through now."

"Go on, I can bear it," she said faintly. "I feel so much better, anyway, now that I am dry and warm."

"So far as I can determine," said the man at last, "it is only a bad, ugly bruise; the skin is torn, it has been battered, but it is neither sprained nor broken, and I don't think it is going to be very serious. Now I am going to bathe it in the hottest water you can bear, and then I will bandage

it and let you go to sleep."

He went out and came back with a kettle of boiling water, with which he laved again and again the poor, torn, battered little member. Never in her life had anything been so grateful as these repeated applications of hot water. After a while he applied a healing lotion of some kind, then he took his long roll of bandage and wound it dexterously around her foot, not drawing it too close to prevent circulation, but just tight enough for support, then as he finished she drew it back beneath the cover.

"Now," said he, "there is nothing more I can do for you tonight, is there?"

"Nothing."

"I want you to go to sleep now, you will be perfectly safe here. I am going down the canon to search—"

"No," said the girl apprehensively. "I dare not be left alone here; besides I know how dangerous it would be for you to try to descend the canon in this rain; you have risked enough for me, you must wait until the morning; I shall feel better then."

"But think of the anxiety of your friends."

"I can't help it," was the nervous reply. "I am afraid to be left alone here at night."

Her voice trembled; he was fearful she would have a nervous breakdown.

"Very well," he said soothingly, "I will not leave you till the morning."

"Where will you stay?"

"I'll make a shakedown for myself in the store room," he answered, "I shall be right within call at any time."

It had grown dark outside by this time and the two in the log hut could barely see each other.

"I think I shall light the fire," continued the man, "it will be sort of company for you and it gets cold up here nights at this season. I shouldn't wonder if this rain turned into snow. Besides, it will dry your clothes for you."

Then he went over to the fireplace, struck a match, touched it to the kindling under the huge logs already prepared, and in a moment a cheerful blaze was roaring up through the chimney. Then he picked up from the floor where she had cast them in a heap her bedraggled garments. He straightened them out as best he could, hung them over the backs of chairs and the table, which he drew as near to the fire as was safe. Having completed this unwanted task he turned to the woman who had watched him curiously and nervously the while.

"Is there anything more that I can do for you?"

"Nothing. You have been as kind and as gentle as you were strong and brave."

He threw his hand out with a deprecating gesture.

"Are you quite comfortable?"

"Yes."

"And your foot?"

"Seems very much better."

"Good night, then. I will call you in the morning."

"Good night," said the girl gratefully, "and God bless you for a true and noble man."

CHAPTER X.

On the Two Sides of the Door.

The cabin contained a large and a small room. In the wall between them there was a doorway closed by an ordinary batten door with a wooden latch and no lock. Closed it served to hide the occupant of one room from the view of the other, otherwise it was but a feeble protection. Even had it possessed a lock, a vigorous man could have burst it through in a moment.

These thoughts did not come very clearly to Enid Maitland. Few thoughts of any kind came to her. Where she lay she could see plainly the dancing light of the glorious fire. She was warm, the deftly wrapped bandage, the healing lotion upon her foot, had greatly relieved the pain in that wounded member. The bed was hard but comfortable, much more so than the sleeping bags to which of late she had been accustomed.

Few women had gone through such experiences, mental and physical, as had befallen her within the last few hours and lived to tell the story. Had it not been for the exhaustive strains of body and spirit to which she had been subjected, her mental faculties would have been on the alert and the strangeness of her unique position would have made her so nervous that she could not have slept.

For the time being, however, the physical demands upon her entity were paramount; she was dry, she was warm, she was fed, she was free from anxiety and she was absolutely unutterably weary. Her thoughts were vague, inchoate, unconcentrated. The fire wavered before her eyes, she closed them in a few moments and did not open them.

Without a thought, without a care, she fell asleep. Her repose was complete, not a dream even disturbed the profound slumber into which she sank. Pretty picture she made: her

head thrown backward, her golden hair roughly dried and quickly plaited in long braids, one of which fell along the pillow while the other curled lovingly around her neck. Her face in the natural light would have looked pallid from what she had gone through, but the fire cast red glows upon it; the fitful light flickered across her countenance and sometimes deep shadows unrelieved accentuated the paleness born of her sufferings.

There is no light that plays so many tricks with the imagination, or that so stimulates the fancy as the light of an open fire. In its sudden outbursts it sometimes seems to add life touches to the sleeping and the dead. Had there been any eye to see this girl, she would have made a delightful picture in the warm glow from the stone hearth. There were no eyes to look, however, save those which belonged to the man on the other side of the door.

On the hither side of that door in the room where the fire burned on the hearth, there was rest in the heart of the occupant; on the farther side where the fire only burned in the heart, there was tumult. Not outward and visible, but inward and spiritual, and yet there was no lack of apparent manifestation of the turmoil in the man's soul.

Albeit the room was smaller than the other, it was still of a good size. He walked nervously up and down from one end to the other as ceaselessly as a wild animal impatient of captivity stalks the narrow limits of his contracted cage. The even tenor of his life had suddenly been diverted. The ordinary sequence of his days had been abruptly changed. The privacy of five years which he had hoped and dreamed might exist as long as he, had been rudely broken in upon. Humanity, which he had avoided from which he had fled, which he had cast away forever, had found him. Abit, excessit, evasit, erupit! And, lo, his departures were all in vain! The world with all its grandeur and its insignificance, with all its powers and its weaknesses, with all its opportunities and its obligations, with all its joys and its sorrows, had knocked at his door; and that the knocking hand was that of a woman, but added to his perplexity and to his dismay.

He had cherished a dream that he could live to himself alone with but a memory to bear him company, and from that dream he had been thunderously awakened. Everything was changed. What had once been easy had now become impossible. He might send her away, but though he swore her to secrecy she would have to tell her story and something of his; the world would learn some of it and seek him out with insatiable curiosity to know the rest.

Eyes as keen as his would presently search and scrutinize the mountains where he had roamed alone. They would see what he had seen, find what he had found. Mankind, gold-lusting, would swarm and live upon the hills and fight and love and breed and die. Great God!

He could of course move on, but where? And went he whithersoever he might, he would now of necessity carry with him another memory which would not dwell within his mind in harmony with the memory which until that day had been paramount there alone.

Slowly, laboriously, painfully, he had built his house upon the sand, and the winds had blown and the floods had come, not only in a literal but in spiritual significance, and in one day that house had fallen. He stood amid the wrecked remains of it trying to recreate it, to endow once more with the fitted precision of the past the shapeless broken units of the fabric of his fond imagination.

While he resented the fierce, savage, passionate intensity the interruption of this woman into his life. While he throbbed with equal intensity and almost as much passion at the thought of her.

Have you ever climbed a mountain early in the morning while it was yet dark and having gained some dominant crest stood staring at the far horizon, the empurpled east, while the "dawn came up like thunder?" Or better still, have you ever stood within the cold, dark recesses of some deep valley of river or pass and watched the clear light spread its bars athwart the heavens like nebulous mighty pinions along the light touched crest of a towering range, until all of a sudden, with a leap almost of joy, the great sun blazed in the high horizon?

You might be born a child of the dark, and light might sear and burn your eye balls accustomed to cooler deeper shades, yet you could no more turn away from this glory, though you might hate it, than by mere effort of will you could cease to breathe the air. The shock that you might feel, the sudden surprise, is only faintly suggestive of the emotions in the breast of this man.

To be continued.